



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

October 2009

Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA)
Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, San Jose, Costa Rica

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

USAID/OFDA Announces New Projects for Disaster Risk Reduction

As part of the new regional strategy focusing on disaster risk reduction (DRR) in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), USAID/OFDA recently awarded funding to support DRR projects in the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Haiti, Jamaica, and Peru, as well as a series of workshops on DRR and protection and gender issues.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC: USAID/OFDA is supporting two projects to reduce vulnerabilities to natural disasters on a community level.

The first, implemented by Plan Internacional, is entitled “*Resiliencia – Strengthening Disaster Management Capacity of Vulnerable Communities in Azua Province.*” USAID/OFDA is providing \$425,693 for the project, designed to strengthen disaster awareness and preparedness, while increasing local capacities to cope with and recover from hurricanes and flooding.

The project seeks to build capacities through the establishment of local disaster management committees and rescue brigades, as well as through a household-level information campaign. More than 22,000 people are expected to benefit from the *Resiliencia* project.

In addition, USAID/OFDA is providing \$225,415 to Catholic Relief Services (CRS) for the 15-month “Disaster Risk Reduction in Sabana Yegua Project.” The project aims to reduce vulnerability along the Yaque del Sur River in the Sabana Yegua municipality, where cyclical heavy rains and flooding frequently cause loss of lives and as-



Photo by Audrey Mullings, USAID/OFDA

A new USAID/OFDA-funded project implemented by Catholic Relief Services in Jamaica will strengthen disaster risk reduction through the establishment of youth emergency action committees to train and empower local adolescents.

sets, displacement of families, and disruption of livelihood activities.

The CRS project will focus on improving community trash collection and disposal to mitigate flooding problems; promoting organic composting; facilitating the devel-

opment of community and family emergency management plans; designing model transitional shelters; improving sanitation; and placing water tanks near community centers identified as emergency shelters.

Continued on page 2

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

Regional Disaster Assistance Program Seeks Risk Reduction Opportunities



Photo by Ricardo Herrera, USAID/OFDA

Efforts will focus on strengthening vulnerable communities' resilience.

Through the Regional Disaster Assistance Program (RDAP), which includes 21 disaster risk management specialists located throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, USAID/OFDA focuses on promoting DRR in two main areas, according to Eduardo Gutiérrez, the DRR specialist for the RDAP.

The first objective is to promote and orient the development of projects, programs, and actions to reduce known disaster risks. Actions generally fall into one of five categories: physical, socioeconomic,

environmental, institutional, and post-disaster rehabilitation and recovery (i.e. inserted into early recovery projects). The RDAP specialists help coordinate these efforts, funded through the RDAP or other USAID/OFDA sources.

The second objective is to increase the resilience of vulnerable communities by strengthening capacities and building on lessons learned in order to increase the ability of families to recover more quickly from disasters.

Continued on page 2

Projects Focus on Implementing DRR

Continued from page 1

GUATEMALA: USAID/OFDA is providing \$1.2 million to support a DRR project implemented by a SHARE Guatemala-led consortium that includes CARE and CRS, to strengthen municipal-level disaster risk management in five Guatemalan municipalities at risk for natural disasters, specifically earthquakes, floods, landslides, and drought. The two-year program will focus on improving coordination among national and local level stakeholders and providing capacity building activities and training in first response, shelter improvement and management, and disaster coordination. Capacity building and training exercises will be offered in Spanish and local indigenous languages to communities through the school system and in coordination with the National Coordinator for Disaster Risk Reduction (CONRED).

HAITI: USAID/OFDA is providing \$646,580 to Save the Children in support of a child-focused disaster preparedness, mitigation, and management project in the city of Gonaïves, where families are still struggling to recover from the effects of four successive storms in 2008. The year-long project seeks to engage children and adolescents as active agents of behavior change and information dissemination in disaster situations. Specifically, the project will help establish emergency response teams and implement disaster preparedness plans in 20 schools. Children and community leaders will also participate hazard and vulnerability assessments in schools and communities. The project will benefit an estimated 25,000 children, and is designed to serve as a model that could be replicated in other disaster-prone departments of Haiti.

JAMAICA: In Jamaica, USAID/OFDA is providing approximately \$150,000 to fund a CRS project entitled, "Community Risk Reduction through Youth Emergency Action Committees in the Urban Neighborhoods of Kingston." CRS will partner with a long-standing community-based organization, St. Patrick's Foundation, to implement the project, which focuses on disaster preparedness, mitigation, and management in vulnerable, impoverished, urban areas. The 15-month project will train more than 3,000 youth in various DRR concepts through newly created emergency action committees, assist youth in training their peers in DRR-related topics, organizing hurricane preparedness celebrations, and performing community environmental clean ups.

PERU: Tens of thousands of inhabitants lost their homes during the devastating August 2007 earthquake in Peru. Many of the houses crumbled during the earthquake because they were poorly built. More than two years after the disaster, it is estimated that only about 10 percent of the houses destroyed in rural areas have been rebuilt. To assist with housing reconstruction in Chincha and to expand upon a previous project to mainstream technologies to improve traditional construction methods for affordable, seismic resistant houses, USAID/OFDA recently provided \$1 million to CARE Peru. CARE will work with various levels of government, including the Ministry of Housing and Construction and the Materials Bank, to promote the institutionalization of a housing decree that mandates and supports the construction of safe and healthy houses in rural areas. The project will also promote the technologies refined under the previous USAID/OFDA-funded project, including adobe construction reinforced with polymer mesh and improved *quincha* (a traditional Peruvian construction technique that uses woven mats).

PROTECTION AND GENDER ISSUES: USAID/OFDA has provided approximately \$300,000 to the International Organization for Migration to support a series of workshops in the LAC region in early 2010, focused on the incorporation of protection and gender issues into DRR planning and activities. The workshops are an initiative to prepare the IV International Gender and Disaster Workshop in Colombia in the first half of 2011. The three USAID/OFDA-funded workshops are designed to continue promoting interaction and dialogue to ensure that humanitarian response, gender equality, and environmental analysis are comprehensively integrated into DRR activities. The objective is to facilitate opportunities to bridge gaps in measuring the impacts of disasters from a gender perspective, and to strengthen the process of systemic coordinating in the global and regional platforms for humanitarian disaster risk reduction.

COMING UP

El Niño Planning Meeting for Andean Region

USAID/OFDA Regional Advisor Phil Gelman is coordinating a meeting with mission disaster relief officers from the Andean region in Ecuador on October 20. Participants will discuss USAID/OFDA preparedness efforts to mitigate the potential effects of the El Niño Southern Oscillation.

INSARAG Americas Annual Meeting

USAID/OFDA is providing logistical assistance and funding for the annual meeting of the International Urban Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG) Regional Group for the Americas, taking place on October 28 and 29 in Guadalajara, Mexico. More than 130 participants are expected to attend.

Disaster Management Alliance Conference

USAID/OFDA is supporting the upcoming conference of the Disaster Management Alliance, a joint effort between the Pan American Development Foundation, American chambers of commerce in the region, and USAID/OFDA. The conference will be held on November 4 and 5 in Guatemala.

Pacific Tsunami Warning System Meeting

USAID/OFDA Regional Advisor Julie Leonard will participate in the Pacific Tsunami Warning System Central America Working Group meeting from November 4 to 6 in Nicaragua.

Forest Firefighter Mobilization Exercises

USAID/OFDA disaster management specialists will provide technical assistance for upcoming national forest firefighter brigade mobilization exercises in Colombia, from November 5 to 7, and Ecuador, from November 13 to 15.

RDAP Works to Promote Risk Reduction

Continued from page 1

"The idea is to ask: What can we do better to reduce the impact of adverse events, while working with local authorities, and what can we do to increase community resilience, working directly with community members?" Gutierrez explained. "We are looking for models to work with, and are now in a stage of exploring opportunities to develop DRR projects that could eventually be replicated, or used as a guide, in other vulnerable regions or countries."

Examples include the recent \$1 million USAID/OFDA grant to CARE Peru to help improve building standards for greater seismic resistance, a project that originated with the "building back better" early recovery project after the devastating earthquake in August 2007 in Peru (see article at left); and ongoing studies to define opportunities to reduce the impacts of the El Niño Southern Oscillation weather phenomenon in the Andean region, and hurricanes and floods in the Caribbean region.

"This work can be accomplished only in concert with the communities and corresponding authorities, and cannot be done from one day to the next. It takes time," Gutierrez added.

USAID/OFDA Regional Advisor Sidney Velado, who coordinates the RDAP, emphasized that USAID/OFDA is committed to investing in DRR activities at the community level in the coming years.

Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Tel: (011-506) 2290-4133

E-mail: ofdalac@ofda.gov

Internet: www.usaid.gov

Keyword: ofdalac